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ABSTRACT

Information from official government reports, professional writings of educators, and the works of Latin American specialists constitute the bulk of this publication. It is designed to provide an overview of the current educational situation in Latin America. This overview is provided by a brief discussion of historical background, the organization of Latin American education, and some of the problems presently plaguing the educational systems in the Southern Hemisphere. A two page bibliography is included. (CWB)

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The Current Situation in LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION

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The Current Situation in LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION

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Introductory Note

THE BRIEF DESCRIPTION of education in Latin America presented here is based on information available to the Office of Education, much of it in unpublished form. The paper has more the character of an article than of a research study and is not formally documented. A list of selected references is provided for the reader's benefit.

This overview of the general situation of education in Latin America has been developed on the basis of years of experience with academic credentials from the area; official reports from Ministries of Education; first hand observation in a number of the countries; and contacts with Latin American specialists in the United States and with educators from a number of the Latin American republics.

This summary should be useful to persons going to the area or wishing to know about some of the principal education problems presently facing other countries in this hemisphere.

I. Introduction: Some Background Factors

Historical Factors

THE LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM and situation have historically reflected the concept of an elite society. This concept underlay the patterns of society in colonial days and, in varying degrees from country to country, has continued to the present to play a significant role in Latin American social thought and processes. Latin American educational development, particularly over the past 40 or 50 years, may be viewed as a gradual, though more recently as an accelerating, process of outgrowing the concept that the principal goal of education is to prepare leaders from the privileged classes for a few long-established professional fields of recognized status. This traditional view is shaped largely by the rural economies of the majority of the countries, and by the long-accepted disposition of the university to prepare persons who would assume leadership in a few "prestige" positions, such as law and medicine. Even among the less privileged groups of society there has been historically strong popular preference for education and training that might lead to professional and other positions of recognized status. Despite the changes in Latin American society in recent years, which are usually referred to as "a social revolution in process," the structure, characteristics, and problems of education in Latin America still reflect to a large extent the societal and value patterns of an earlier day.

Sociological-Anthropological Factors

Of significance for understanding the current educational situation is the demographic problem. The population of Latin America, now about 200 million, is increasing annually by about 5 million, or at a rate of 2.6 percent, faster than that of any other region of the world. Of even more significance for education is the fact that more than 40 percent of the population of the entire area is under 15 years of age, and probably close to half is under 21. The quantitative educational problem posed by these statistics is obvious.

Another background factor having educational implications is the steady trend toward urbanization of Latin American society. It is estimated that the urban population increased from 39 percent to 46 percent of the total population between 1950 and 1960. Six countries—Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, Cuba, and Mexico—are now 50 percent or more urban, and Brazil, Colombia, and Peru have also shown heavy urban growth. One factor has been an influx of untrained and unskilled persons from rural areas into the large cities, and the consequent growth of urban slums on their outskirts. This situation intensifies the need for teaching basic labor skills and for creating a place in society for these individuals who potentially form a politically volatile group.

At the same time, the rural population is also increasing in all countries, except Uruguay, although at a less accelerated rate than the urban population. There has always been an especially wide gulf between the patterns of rural and urban society in most Latin American countries. This gulf is even wider in countries having large numbers of Indians and mestizos (mixed Indian and white) living in rural communities and areas outside national cultural patterns. Such differences are clearly discernible in the Andean countries—Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador—as well as in parts of Mexico and some of the Central American countries where certain cultural groups and rural populations live quite apart from the main streams of national life. Such "outgroups," often motivated by separate value patterns and attitudes, generally have different educational needs. With certain notable exceptions, they have been almost totally neglected in the provision of education suited to their present needs, and to the long-run objective of creating a productive place for them in the national life.

Economic Factors

It is generally known that despite economic growth and development in Latin America, its countries generally have low economic levels and are faced with multiple problems—unfavorable trade balances, one-crop economies, inflation, and limited budgets. However it could probably be demonstrated historically that in most countries there has been unwillingness to put a sufficient amount of the gross national product and public revenues into education. In recent years, a number of countries have shown marked evidence of change of attitude in this respect.

Demand for Education

There are two additional background facts of potentially dynamic import for educational development in Latin America. First is the irresistible social ferment that has produced a popular expectation and demand for economic and social betterment of the individual, along with a popular awakening to the potential of education as a key to such advancement. Second is the wider recognition by Latin American governments and people of the necessity for meeting these demands, as evidenced by their concern for the educational goals of the Punta del Este Charter which proclaimed the Alliance for Progress, and for the work of various agencies and organizations interested in their realization.

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II. Educational Administration, Organization, and Structure

Administration

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES in general have centralized (national) systems of educational administration and control, through the secondary level. National ministries of education set the curriculums and plans of study, and, in most countries, have authority in matters of supervision, inspection, selection of teaching materials, teacher appointments, and certification of diplomas conferred. In the so-called federal states—Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela—and in Colombia, there is some decentralization of administration to state or provincial authorities. In Brazil, for example, day-to-day administration of elementary education is a state function, while secondary education is in the hands of the National Ministry of Education. However, programs and plans of study are generally inflexible in all countries and must follow the pattern set by the national ministry.

Ministers of education are usually political appointees of cabinet rank and are subject to frequent change. This has made for instability and lack of continuity in educational policy in the majority of countries. Since the idea of a career government service is not well rooted, there is frequent changing of ministers, with subsequent effects in the appointment and removal of teachers, the formulation of plans of study, and the establishment of schools.

There is a shortage of trained administrators, curriculum specialists, and school inspectors. In only a few countries are there institutions offering special programs of training in various fields of educational administration. Within the past 5 years there has developed in educational circles an interest in systematic planning of education and its coordination with general plans of national development. Educational planning offices have been established in the education ministries in a number of countries.

With respect to the administration of higher education, Latin American universities generally have become "autonomous" over the past 40 years. This means that, whether public or private, they are self-administering, not subject to direct ministerial or government control,

a right which they jealously guard. However, autonomy has meant as much or as little in any given situation as political conditions and governments have permitted it to mean; in practice, except for extreme political circumstances, university autonomy is now usually respected. Brazil provides an exception to the pattern, with the Ministry of Education having general administrative control.

Other public institutions of higher learning, not usually considered universities, that offer various kinds of specialized education are usually subject to the appropriate ministry.

Finance

Public financing of education in Latin America is principally the responsibility of the central governments. In the federal or semi-federal countries, a part of the cost is met by state and local governments. Public funds for the universities in some countries are included in the educational budget and dispersed through the Ministries of Education, while in others they are appropriated separately. In some cases budget control has been used or threatened as a means of curtailing university autonomy. In certain countries (e.g., Colombia) public funds are made available to private institutions, including church-related schools. U.S. Government funds have been made available to a number of the Latin American republics for education under programs of technical cooperation and educational and cultural exchange, as have funds from international organizations (UNESCO, Organization of American States, and others).

Private funds are available only on a limited scale, usually through the establishment of private institutions of learning. Large endowments of educational institutions by private sources are rare. Private industry has in a few cases contributed funds to programs of vocational training, sometimes through taxes imposed by governments. Foreign private foundations and business concerns, principally those in the United States, are becoming another source of financing.

Lack of sufficient funds for education is a chronic problem in Latin America as in the rest of the world, and underlies many of the quantitative problems in education. Reliable and comparable figures for the different countries on the percentage of the gross national income or product devoted to education are inconclusive or lacking. Nevertheless, while there appear to have been moderate and, in some cases, large increases in the percentages devoted to education in most countries since 1950, the increase for Latin America as a whole does not appear to have been noteworthy. Progress is also being made in both percentage and absolute increases in national education budgets—though a good part of this increase is brought about by inflation. For example, in the period between 1956 and 1959, this percentage in-

crease varied in 15 countries from 11 percent for Guatemala to 269 percent for Bolivia. Nevertheless, the percentages of national governmental budgets for education have in general been low and have changed little throughout the years, though improvements are now being made.

A minority of countries, including Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru, and Uruguay, allot a fixed percentage of national government revenues to education. For instance, Colombia now provides in its Constitution that not less than 10 percent of the total budget shall be devoted to education. In some countries higher education is allotted a percentage of the total education budget rather than a fixed proportion of all governmental revenues. Some of the countries have tended to spend a relatively large share of the available funds on central educational administration rather than on educational facilities, program, and instruction.

Organization and Structure of the School System

The pattern and organization of education in Latin America are of European origin. One criticism sometimes made by Latin Americans themselves is that this system has not adapted to the real needs of Latin American society.

Most Latin American countries have 11- or 12-year systems of elementary-secondary education. Twelve-year systems are found in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, Panama, and Uruguay. Haiti has a 13-year system.

Elementary Education

The term used in Latin American countries for this level is "primary" education. In most of the countries such education is free and legally compulsory for children from 7 to 14 years of age, but the compulsory provision is inoperative in many localities because of their lack of schools and teachers, great distances from school in rural areas, and lack of transportation. The regular primary program is 6 years in most countries; in Argentina it is 7, and in Brazil and Colombia, 5 years. In a few countries it rises to 8 years for those not going on to a secondary school. In rural areas the primary program is no more than 4 years, and even as low as 2 years in some countries.

Secondary Education

In Latin America, this term traditionally has been applied to academic, university preparatory education. Vocational education has

usually been termed "technical," "industrial," "commercial," or "agricultural" education. Another type of secondary-level education is given in normal schools for the preparation of teachers. The term "middle education" (*educación media*) is commonly used to refer to all secondary-level education in some countries.

The various types of secondary-level education have usually been offered in separate schools, rather than in the comprehensive type secondary (high) school familiar in the United States. In a few instances a common lower cycle of secondary education, somewhat comparable to junior high school in the United States, has been introduced as a prerequisite to further secondary-level education.

Since colonial days, secondary-level education has consisted principally of academic preparation of students for the universities. Secondary schools offering this preparation have been private, public, or annexed to a university, but programs of study have been fixed by the national authorities. The tendency appears to depart from previous requirements of entrance examinations and payment of fees in public secondary schools, although nine countries apparently still require such examinations. The university preparatory program covers 5 or 6 years in most countries, and in Brazil and Haiti, 7 years. The bachelor's diploma (*bachillerato*) in the majority of the Latin American republics is awarded by or in the name of the Ministry of Education, frequently after a common final examination, and qualifies a student for university entrance.

Both vocational and agricultural education at the secondary level are in great need of expansion. Enrollment in vocational schools represents, at the most, only 25 percent of the student body in secondary schools, and usually less. These schools usually provide a general or prevocational cycle similar to the first cycle of academic education, plus some vocationally oriented subjects. Programs vary from 2 to 5 years and on completion provide a certificate or title in the particular field, and in some cases serve as a basis for further vocational and technical training.

The Agency for International Development (AID) has been working with the Latin American governments in these programs for a number of years, and the schools in existence, although limited in number, are known to be of high quality. UNESCO, the Organization of American States, and the Rockefeller Foundation, among other groups, have also been active in the field of agricultural and rural education.

Teacher Education

Formal preparation of teachers for the elementary schools generally takes place in secondary-level normal schools which offer a combined

program of general education and teacher training. (Costa Rica, where such preparation is at the higher education level, is an exception.) In urban normal schools, programs are generally comparable in length to those in academic secondary schools. Rural normal school programs, where available, are usually shorter and may consist of 2, 3, or 4 years of training beyond an abbreviated program of primary education. The only postprimary schools available in many rural areas are normal schools, if even these are available, and they are frequently attended by students having no desire or intention to teach. In fact, many teachers, particularly in rural areas, receive no special preparation, but commence teaching with only a primary school education. Inservice programs of training have been instituted for such teachers.

Formal programs for the preparation of secondary and normal school teachers are offered in higher normal schools, pedagogic institutes, and university schools (faculties) of education, humanities, or philosophy and letters, depending on the situation in individual countries. Facilities for preparation of vocational teachers are being developed, but are extremely limited in most countries.

Higher Education

National, State, or private universities provide higher education, and institutes and independent faculties offer specialized or professional programs. Institutions at the higher education level for the preparation of teachers outside the universities have been mentioned. Nonuniversity facilities for other kinds of education include institutions such as the National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico which offers secondary and higher education programs of vocational and technical education.

Universities are generally loose unions of practically independent faculties (schools) with few relationships among them. Programs of study vary from 2 to 9 or 10 years and are largely professional or specialized with fixed curriculums and few, if any, electives. Students generally enter directly from secondary school into the professional faculty of their choice (for some programs, less than full secondary education is required). In most institutions no liberal arts studies, preprofessional programs of general studies, or general education subjects are included in the professional or specialized programs. A few institutions have begun to include such studies either in their professional programs or as prerequisites.

Graduate work as organized and understood in the United States is virtually nonexistent in Latin America, though programs of 5 years or longer, and programs of special research institutes, may have

some resemblances. For this reason those desiring advanced education and training for research, university teaching, and various highly specialized positions are usually compelled to undertake graduate work abroad. Some countries have specially organized programs to this end, as for example, in Colombia the Colombian Institute for Advanced Study Abroad (Instituto Colombiano de Especialización Técnica en el Exterior—ICETEX).

Higher education in Latin America is chiefly public education, though a number of private institutions have developed in recent years. Most of these are church affiliated, but there are a few exceptions, such as the University of the Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, and the Institute of Technology and Higher Studies of Monterrey, Mexico. In public institutions tuition is usually free or nominal.

Adult and Community Education

Facilities for adult and community education exist in all Latin American countries, but information is generally lacking on their scope and nature. They include literacy programs for adults and community development and education projects in rural areas, such as the literacy and community education programs of Radio Sutatenza in Colombia (the so-called "radiophonic" schools), the Cultural Missions program in Mexico, and the rural *núcleo* school programs in several Andean countries. Night school programs in continuing and vocational education are conducted in urban areas, and some countries have well-developed apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs and facilities, similar to the National Service of Industrial Apprenticeship in Brazil and in Colombia, financed mainly by taxes on private industry payrolls. Little interest has been shown in adult education for those who have completed secondary or higher education studies.

Private Education

A significant factor in Latin American education is that the area has had a secondary education system of restricted access in which private schools play an important part, as contrasted with the elementary and higher education systems which are largely public. The fact that financial resources are insufficient to support an extensive public secondary education system may reflect to some degree a historic view that any obligation on the part of society to provide for the educational needs of the bulk of the population is filled by the elementary school. Moreover, to a large extent higher education evolved historically on the premise that it was in the interest of society to provide free public

higher education, but limited in access except to those of the privileged groups. In recent years the demand for free public higher education has spread to all groups.

The percentages of students enrolled in private schools for the three levels of education vary from country to country. Recent figures indicate that private primary enrollment ranged from 3.9 percent in the Dominican Republic to 26.1 percent in Chile. In contrast, private secondary enrollment ranged from 20 percent in Costa Rica to 62 percent in Colombia, 67 percent in Brazil, and 70 percent in Nicaragua, and was between 30 percent and 50 percent in most countries. The overwhelming majority of private secondary schools are academic and their students have generally attended private primary schools. In higher education, on the other hand, the vast majority of those enrolled have been in public institutions. In no country was a majority enrolled in private institutions at this level, and only in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Peru were there appreciable minorities so enrolled. Private education at all levels has been church related to a large extent.

III. Some Problems of Latin American Education

Quantitative Factors

Within Latin America there are great quantitative differences in the educational situation of individual countries and even within the same country, with obvious urban-rural differences. Regional differences exist in certain of the larger countries. For example, there is marked contrast between relatively affluent southern Brazil and depressed northern Brazil, though this is also to a considerable extent an urban-rural difference.

In fact, Latin America may be divided into three groups of countries whose quantitative situation of education graduates from a more favorable to a less favorable status: Group I consists of six countries—Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, and Cuba, and perhaps Panama; group II includes Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, and possibly the Dominican Republic; group III countries are El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Haiti.

Illiteracy

The illiteracy rate of a region or a country may be regarded as a rough indication of a minimum educational achievement.

Although there are great differences in individual country literacy rates, at least 40 to 45 percent of Latin Americans 15 years of age and older are probably illiterate, if the simple criterion of inability to read and write is used. However, although the percentage of illiteracy on this basis is apparently decreasing, the actual numbers of illiterates are probably increasing because of the rapid rise in the population. And if the criterion of literacy is ability to read and write at the level required for completion of the fourth grade, it is estimated that the illiteracy rate for Latin America as a whole is about 70 percent.

The illiteracy rate in countries of group I mentioned above would be under 30 percent by the simple definition of illiteracy (inability to read and write). For the countries in group II, it would range

between 30 percent and 60 percent, and for group III, would be over 60 percent. Countries with a large proportion of rural population generally have a higher percentage of illiteracy than do those with larger urban populations, sometimes in almost direct ratio to the percentage of rural inhabitants in the total population. That this does not have to be the case, however, is shown by Costa Rica, which, though principally rural, has a low illiteracy rate.

Serious as illiteracy is, it is basically a symptom of educational deficiencies rather than the problem itself. Direct attacks on illiteracy, apart from efforts to improve educational and community conditions generally, have had only limited and transitory success.

Educational Level of Adult Population

The reasons for adult illiteracy are obvious if one examines the low educational level achieved by the Latin American population 15 years of age and above. Data on this group are not yet available from recent censuses, and when available, will probably show a somewhat more favorable situation. Those available for 1950 indicated that the average number of years of schooling completed by this age group was 2.2 years. Almost half had not attended any school. The average educational level varied from 4.2 years in Chile to 0.5 year in Haiti.

The average number of years completed by those who had attended school, as shown by the 1950 figures, was 4.4, ranging from 5.3 years in Chile to 3.2 years in the Dominican Republic. At that time perhaps 10 percent of the 15-year-and-over age group in Latin America had completed primary school, 6 percent had had some secondary-level education, 2 percent had completed a full secondary program, and 1 percent had begun some form of higher education, with only a fraction of this group completing a full program of studies.

School Enrollment

The first step toward preventing adult illiteracy and imparting a basic education is obviously through regular school programs before children become adults. In the pressing problem of expanding school enrollments in Latin America, some progress is being made, but the problem is compounded by the fact that the school age population increases so rapidly. The pressure is felt through all levels of the educational system, as an increasing number of students at each grade level advance each year to the next grade.

Primary school enrollment was estimated in 1960 at 26 million, or about 60 percent of the population of primary school age (6 or 7 to 13

or 14 years of age). Despite the fact that 40 percent were not enrolled in school, those enrolled represented more than two-thirds increase over the approximately 15 million enrolled about 1950, as against an increase of about 30 percent in population of this age group in the same period. Even in the group I countries, about 20 percent of the children of primary school age were not in school. In countries of group II about 45 percent were not enrolled, and well over half in the group III countries were not enrolled. Some 20 million children of this age group were not enrolled in school in 1960.

There was an even larger percentage increase in the numbers enrolled in secondary-level education during the decade 1950–60, with the largest increases in the countries of group I and group II, in that order. Overall, the number increased from about 1,600,000 to about 3 million, or approximately 80 percent compared to a 30-percent increase in the population of the corresponding age group. Secondary enrollment in 1960 was approximately 11 percent of primary enrollment, a slight percentage increase over the situation in 1950. The increase varied from about 8 percent in group III countries to 22.5 percent in countries of group I. Vocational education accounted for 20–25 percent of total secondary-level enrollments.

In higher education, total enrollment in 1960 was about 500,000, which represented about 17 percent of secondary school and 2 percent of primary school enrollments. This was an increase of about 100 percent over the estimated enrollment of 240,000 in 1950.

Absenteeism and School Dropouts

Absenteeism and school dropouts constitute a serious problem in most of Latin America. They exist at all levels. The factors behind this situation are a combination of social-economic and educational conditions. Frequently enrollments in the first year or two are so large for the limited facilities that one objective of the educational system seems to be to weed out pupils as rapidly as possible. Poor economic conditions, lack of adequate food and clothing, malnutrition, disease, and poor health conditions are contributing problems. Particularly in rural areas, the advantages of education not related to needs and local environment are not always apparent to either parents or children. Parents demand that children work in the home or the field, and they often live great distances from the schools. In urban areas, parental unwillingness to continue to support a child after he attains an age at which he can contribute to his own support is a factor. Even in the most advanced Latin American countries, approximately 75 percent of pupils beginning primary school and 68 percent of the minority going on to a secondary school failed to com-

plete their respective programs, and only 5 percent of those who began primary education completed secondary schooling. Again, there is a marked difference between the situation in urban and rural areas. In Colombia, for example, it was indicated over a recent period that the urban retention rate was more than 30 percent, while in the rural zones it dropped to 1 percent.

Since the secondary school primarily has been concerned with preparation for university professional studies, those who did not aspire to the professions did not consider it requisite to continue beyond the primary school. In even the group I countries named, the certificate awarded for completion of primary education is greatly prized.

Physical Shortages

Physical shortages of buildings, supplies, textbooks, other instructional materials, and teaching aids are among the most obvious deficiencies in Latin America. While there are some good school buildings, well equipped with teaching materials, libraries, and laboratories, these are the exceptions. Initial expenditures for school construction are often not followed up with budgetary provision for the necessary maintenance.

Shortages of buildings, especially in rural areas, lead to several teaching shifts a day, sometimes as many as three or four, so that the time spent in the classroom, already at a minimum in a 2- or 3-year program, is still further reduced to a fraction of the minimum for an acceptable education. The shortage of texts and teaching materials is a factor in the teaching technique that results in the teacher's dictation of a lesson, or writing text material on the blackboard (if one is available and there is chalk), which pupils then copy (if they have paper and pencils).

Teacher Shortages and Deficiencies

The shortage of trained teachers throughout Latin America is probably the most serious block to educational advancement. If school buildings were available for all primary age children, there would be an immediate shortage of about 500,000 teachers. Approximately 45 percent of the elementary teachers throughout the area have not been prepared through the normal school programs, and, therefore, are not regularly certificated. Rural areas suffer by comparison with urban areas, and teachers trained in urban areas are reluctant to accept rural assignment. Other problems are low salaries, heavy pupil-teacher load, insecurity of tenure, and low social and occupational status.

At the secondary level there are similar problems. While usually the secondary-level teachers are better prepared academically than elementary teachers, the proportion of untrained secondary teachers is higher than in elementary schools, since only a few countries have a sufficient number of special institutions for professional preparation of secondary-level teachers. Although some teachers may have taken university degree programs, they lack any training to teach. Part-time employment among many secondary teachers is common because the limited demand for full-time teaching services makes it necessary for teachers to hold other positions often unrelated to teaching. Teachers may also instruct in more than one school. In either case, there are resulting disadvantages to the development of satisfactory pupil-teacher relationships that encourage the best learning situations.

Qualitative Factors

In addition to the quantitative deficiencies and problems of Latin American education, certain qualitative factors are significant in the total educational picture. The principal problem is that of re-orienting the traditional philosophy, content, and methods of education at all levels to meet the needs of present-day life. Characteristics of the system underlying the necessity for such reorientation are generally stated as: (1) Overemphasis on academic curriculum; (2) lack of practical instruction and applied science; and (3) the predominance in universities of education in the traditional professions unrelated to technical and scientific needs. In other words, educational methods still appear to be geared to the social-intellectual objectives of an earlier day, and not to providing a means for every individual to achieve his potential in society regardless of his social status.

Moreover, educational methods and practices crystallized into laws, regulations, and generally accepted techniques acquire a rigidity and characteristics which resist change. Although new instructional programs and subjects are being introduced, the academic and theoretical are still emphasized. As previously noted, educational programs are generally inflexible throughout most of the Latin American countries, with little adaptation to local environment and needs, exemplified particularly by programs in rural areas. Terminal education designed to fit pupils for a useful role in urban areas is also a great need of Latin American schooling. These needs are being recognized by most Latin American educational leaders, but it is a slow process to translate this recognition into the needed program changes, particularly when the educational objectives of an elite society still underlie the thinking among the favored social and economic groups and the common people.

Methods of teaching and learning still emphasize memorizing encyclopedic detail emanating from the teacher, whether it be at elementary, secondary, or higher education levels. Shortages and the expense of texts and other learning materials have contributed to prolonging this practice. General lack of laboratory and scientific equipment, and lack of an appreciation of and interest in scientific method, observation, and analysis lead to teaching of science subjects theoretically. The general underdevelopment of social studies and the social sciences, apart from the historical, legalistic, and moralistic approaches, often results in a lack of realistic and useful instruction about social and community problems. Latin American teachers are usually trained in rote memorization and reflect in their teaching the methods and techniques by which they learned. Both the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and problems are exemplified in the most extreme form by the educational situation in rural areas and communities.

Higher Education—Some Special Factors and Problems

Most of the quantitative and qualitative factors and problems apply both to higher education and to lower levels of instruction. However, there are certain factors of special significance for higher education.

The nature of the student bodies of the public universities in most Latin American countries has been drastically transformed over the past 40 years. Historical tradition to the contrary, they are no longer drawn largely from the economic and social elite; those from the middle class and the less privileged social groups now generally form the majority. This is, of course, another way of saying that the forces of social change which have been transforming Latin American society have reached the universities.

Accompanying this change has been the increased role of students in matters of university administration and reform, as well as in national politics. The modern university student movement began in 1918 at the University of Córdoba in Argentina and has spread throughout Latin America. It has concerned itself with obtaining recognition of university autonomy, reforms in administration and programs of study, and a prominent role for students in university administration. The student movement has also played an important part in effecting a good many modernizing reforms in Latin American higher education.

At the same time, students have come to play a role in the details of university policy and administration scarcely comprehensible in the United States. Their activity is evident not only through their participation in administration through the system known as co-government, but through student strikes and other direct action and

their active role in national politics. At times it has seemed that Latin American university students have been more interested in university administration and national politics than in academic pursuits, evidenced, for example, by the classtime lost because of student strikes and suspension of classes. On the other hand, this activity has been defended as an indication of the deep interest of students in public affairs. In some cases students have played an important role in the overthrow of dictators. One factor in the growth of private universities in some countries has been a reaction to political motivation and activities and an alleged lack of seriousness of academic purpose of students in public universities.

One result of the change in the composition of the university student body is that students have become, to a considerable extent, part-time students because they must work to support themselves. This is one reason why students are often unable to complete their studies in the required length of time. It may also help explain, in part, their preoccupation with politics and other aspects of the national life. Though there is no general discrimination against women as university students, in most institutions the majority of students are male—a reflection of the fact that most university programs are oriented to professions ordinarily dominated by men.

Ever present in Latin American universities is the general problem of shortage of physical facilities and equipment to meet the constantly increasing demand for higher education. While in recent years the large national universities in some countries have been able to build large campuses, called "university cities," others, particularly those away from the national capitals, have not been so fortunate. Lack of funds is, of course, a major factor in the difficulties encountered in building up full-time teaching staffs. Large numbers of part-time professors are professional men devoting a few hours a week to teaching. Even if the funds were available, there is a dearth of persons especially prepared for teaching and for scholarly pursuits at the higher education level because of the almost exclusively professional orientation of university education and limited programs and facilities for graduate study.

One result of the increasing demand for higher education is an extremely rapid growth in the number of institutions. Popular demands for schools exist in each region or local area, where every department (state) must have its own university. This makes at times for duplication of study programs and a waste of limited financial resources, and raises a problem of standards of instruction. In several countries, associations of universities or institutions of higher education are trying to cope with some of these problems and to provide a means of cooperation in matters of common interest.

In the Central American countries, a regional approach of cooperation among the national universities is underway.

A related problem is that of admissions standards. Traditionally, there have been no requirements for entrance to most Latin American universities other than completion of university preparatory education. As enrollments rise and strain the limited facilities, and as new fields of study demanding better preparation are added to the programs offered, there are the beginnings of selective admission policies and procedures in some institutions. Such attempts to limit enrollment have met with opposition, since the students tend to regard university education more and more as a prerogative.

There are also increasing complaints about poorly prepared students and the need for better programs in secondary schools. And it is obvious that the limited enrollments in both elementary and secondary education restrict the source of potentially good students.

In social and economic development, one of the most obvious needs is a program of higher education and training in related areas, such as technological education, business and public administration, advanced agricultural studies, and professional education. Some Latin American universities are adding these studies or modernizing existing programs. In new universities the emphasis is frequently in these fields, and often it seems easier to start new institutions than to modernize programs in those already established. As previously noted, general education or preprofessional studies are being added to the professional curriculums in some institutions.

One problem in connection with new studies is persuading students to enter them. In most instances, the professions of medicine, law, and theoretical engineering remain the major attractions for students, while interest in such fields as agriculture and animal husbandry is limited, even in countries where they are the major sectors of the economy.

Other almost undeveloped university activities are research and community service and extension functions. Inadequate budgets contribute to the limitations in research, but the system of part-time professors and the lack of scholars oriented to and trained for advanced study and research are principal factors.

Summary

In this paper effort has been made to set forth some of the principal facts of Latin American education and the major problems related to its future development. In addition to material deficiencies and needs in this regard, it has seemed at times in the past that more enthusiasm and greater determination on the part of Latin American

governments and people would go far in making education the key to their economic and social development. In recent years, however, there have been encouraging indications of progress in this direction. Of particular current note has been the growing recognition of the essential values of education, as evidenced in the Punta del Este Charter establishing the Alliance for Progress and subsequent efforts to apply and implement its recommendations.

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